
THE REFEREE

Decisions by the USGA and the R. and A. Rules of Golf Committees

Example of symbols: "USGA" indicates decision by the United States Golf Association. "R & A" indicates decision by the Royal and Ancient Golf Club of St. Andrews, Scotland. "52-1" means the first decision issued in 1952. "R. 37-7" refers to Section 7 of Rule 37 in the 1952 Rules of Golf.

Out-of-Bounds Line

USGA 52-29
D. 21

Q: In Definition 21 regarding out of bounds you state that the out-of-bounds line is a line drawn through the inside edge of the stakes or posts at the ground level.

If this is correct, then a ball could be inside the fence marking the outside line of the fence posts and still be out of bounds, since the fence is always on the outside of the posts and the posts are always larger than the diameter of a golf ball. (Is this the intent or is this a misprint of the Rules application?)

Question by: PAUL RUNYAN
PASADENA, CAL.

A: The reference to Definition 21 is correct.

Means of marking boundaries are so irregular and diverse that the only sure way of having a uniform boundary is by taking the inside line at ground level.

Fences are not always on the far side (away from the course) of the posts to which they are attached.

If the outside line of stakes and fence posts were used, it would sometimes be physically impossible to line up a ball because of conditions on the far side, because it might require climbing a fence, because it might involve trespassing on adjoining property, and for other reasons.

Cleaning Ball on Green

USGA 52-30
R. 23-3, 35

Q: Rule 23-3 of the 1952 Rules of Golf provides, with certain exceptions, that a player may not clean his ball, "except to the extent necessary for identification or if permitted by Local Rule".

We are aware that the cleaning of the ball is permitted under the Local Rule set forth in the Appendix of the Rules of Golf, such Rule to be operative only on specific days when warranted.

But is it permissible to adopt a Local Rule allowing the cleaning of the ball on the putting green at all times? Inasmuch as Rule 35 authorizes the lifting of the ball on the putting green to avoid interference with play, prohibiting the cleaning of the ball when so lifted would seem impractical to enforce.

Question by: ALBIN MARTINSON
SACRAMENTO, CAL.

A: A permanent Local Rule permitting cleaning the ball on the putting green at all times would conflict with the Rules of Golf. A number of Rules other than Rule 35 permit lifting the ball. It is up to the honesty of the player to refrain from doing more than the Rules allow. Further, he should act so as to raise no question of wrong intention.

Wrong Ball and Lost Ball Penalties

USGA 52-33
R. 21-3, 29-1

Q: I play from the tee into deep rough. I go to "my ball" and continue play, discovering subsequently that I played the wrong ball out of the rough. Knowing Rule 21-3, I return to find my own ball, having already added two strokes as a penalty to my one stroke off the tee. I can't find my own ball and have to return to the tee to play another. Lost ball penalty is stroke and distance. Am I then shooting five from the tee?

Question by:
MRS. M. R. DENISON, RULES CHRMN.
ST. JOSEPH VALLEY GOLF ASS'N.
SOUTH BEND, INDIANA

A: Yes. The original stroke from the teeing ground was your first stroke. You incurred a penalty of two strokes under Rule 21-3 for playing the wrong ball, not in a hazard. You also incurred another penalty stroke under Rule 29-1 for the lost ball. Your next stroke from the teeing ground would be your fifth. These Rules govern in stroke play.

Lift from Log Not Permitted

USGA 52-32
D.17, 20; R.18, 31

Q: There is a dead log lying in the rough, and the ball is lying so close to the log that it interferes with the swing; is it permissible to drop the ball away without penalty?

Question by: LAWRENCE WREN
NEW YORK, N. Y.

A: No. As a log is a natural object, it is a loose impediment under Definition 17. The log (not the ball) may be lifted as provided for in Rule 18.

The Rules make a distinction between natural objects and artificial objects, the latter being classed as obstructions under Definition 20 and Rule 31.

Logs Piled for Removal

USGA 52-38

D. 13, 17; R. 18, 32-1a, 2.

Q: During a four-ball match at Deepdale on May 1, 1952, one player's ball lodged underneath a section of a tree trunk located approximately 20 feet out of the fairway. This tree trunk had been sawed into sections, several of these sections lying together. In this position the ball was unplayable. The question arose as to whether or not the player is entitled to a free drop.

The greenkeeper at Deepdale has testified that several trees on the course had been cut down and that said tree trunks had been divided into sections that could be subsequently removed. As a matter of fact, on the day following the above-mentioned discussion, several truckloads of these logs were removed. The greenkeeper also testified that these particular logs were cut into sections to be removed and would be removed in the immediate future.

I would appreciate it very much if you would give me a ruling on this question.

Question by: H. V. SHERRILL

NEW YORK, N. Y.

A: The sawed sections of the tree trunk constituted material piled for removal within the meaning of Definition 13. The player therefore was entitled to free relief as provided for in Rule 32-1a; see also Rule 32-2. In order to regard material as being piled for removal, there must be substantial evidence to that effect.

It should be noted, however, that a branch or a limb of a tree which has fallen and is lying loose must generally be regarded as a loose impediment under Definition 17. In that case relief is limited by Rule 18.

Relief from Wire Screen

USGA 52-35

D. 20; R. 16, 24-1, 2, 31.

Q1: A wire screen is to the right of one fairway guarding the tee of another hole. A ball goes up behind the screen, one foot away from it. I understand that the player is permitted to drop two club-lengths away from the nearest point of the obstruction to the ball's present position. Does this mean that the ball must remain on the same side of screen that it now is? Does this mean that, even though the screen is 12 feet high, the player must play over the screen? I understand it this way, but some players think that he would be entitled to relief from the obstruction and be able to move two club-lengths from the end of the green, dropped not more than two club-lengths

A1: Your understanding of Rule 31-2, regarding immovable obstructions, is generally correct. If the player's stance or stroke or the backward movement of his club for the stroke is interfered with by the screen cited, the ball may be lifted without penalty and, through the green, dropped not more than two club-lengths

from that point of the obstruction nearest which the ball originally lay and must come to rest not nearer the hole. The ball must be dropped on the same side of the screen as it originally lay, and the Rule is intended only to provide relief so that the player may play a stroke, but not necessarily have his line of flight clear.

Ball Interfering in Hazard More than Club-length Away

Q2: A and B are in a bunker (a so-called trap). B is farther from the hole. B elects to putt the ball. A's ball is in his way, in his line to the hole but more than a club-length from his ball. Doesn't B have the right to ask A to mark his ball, and isn't A required to do so? In stroke play I understand this is correct. Why should it be any different in match play, if it is? Suppose that both balls were through the green (in the fairway)? Please explain this to me. I can't see, with the elimination of the stymie, why one ball should affect the play of another.

A2: In match play, B has no right to ask A to lift his ball and A would be penalized under Rule 16 if he touched his ball, because the balls are more than a club-length apart and are not on the putting green; see Rule 24-1. The situation is different in stroke play because each competitor is playing against the field, not against a single opponent; see Rule 24-2.

Relief from Obstruction May Provide Relief from Tree

Q3: A tree and a fixed artificial obstruction interfered with the play of a ball. If the two club-lengths rule applied, the ball would be playable. If it didn't, there was no shot that could be played. What is the procedure?

A3: A tree is a natural object, not an obstruction; see Definition 20. There is no Rule which provides free relief from trees. Relief from artificial obstructions, under certain conditions, is provided in Rule 31.

If the player is entitled to relief from an obstruction, he may take such relief even though he is incidentally relieved from interference by a natural object.

Questions by: CHARLES F. BAILEY
TAMPA, FLA.

Bridge Is Obstruction

USGA 52-36

D. 20.

Q: In studying Definition 20 (Obstructions), the point is made that artificially constructed roads and paths are not obstructions. Does this mean that a bridge spanning a ditch would be considered an artificially constructed road or path?

Question by: DR. ROGER L. HESS
ELGIN, ILL.

A: No. A bridge is artificial and therefore is an obstruction within the meaning of Definition 20.

Caddie as Marker

USGA 52-37
D. 18; R. 22, 23-2, 29-2, 33-1e, 35-2d, 38-1

Q1: When no official marker has been assigned, is there a disqualification penalty if the caddie marks the score?

A1: No. It is assumed that a fellow-competitor was appointed marker. There is no penalty if his caddie marks the scores, but the procedure is not recommended. See Definition 18 and Rule 38-1.

Opponent's Ball Knocked in Hole

Q2: If a player has holed out and concedes her opponent's putt by knocking the ball into the hole or by picking it up (instead of by knocking it away) what is the ruling?

A2: Rule 35-2d provides in part: "When the player has holed out and the opponent's ball has come to rest, the player may knock away the opponent's ball, claiming the hole or conceding the half, as the case may be." In proceeding under this Rule, there is no distinction in substance between knocking away an opponent's ball, knocking it into the hole or lifting it. This Rule is effective only after the player himself has holed out and the opponent's ball has come to rest.

Dropping into Unplayable Lie

Q3: A player has an unplayable lie and elects to drop a ball, taking the two-stroke penalty. When she drops, it rolls into another unplayable lie (not the same one as the first). May she redrop without penalty or does it stand as a second unplayable lie with penalty for each?

A3: Rule 22-1b provides in part: "A ball is in play when dropped and shall not be redropped except as provided." The exceptions do not include the contingency of dropping the ball into an unplayable lie, as it is a matter of individual discretion as to whether a lie is unplayable. If a ball, when dropped as provided in Rule 22, comes to rest in an unplayable lie, the player can only proceed as provided in Rule 29-2.

Lifting for Identification in Hazard

Q4: Rule 23-2 states that a player may lift his ball for identification. Rule 33-1e states that in a hazard he may remove as much sand or fallen leaves as will enable him to see the top of the ball. Does this mean that in a hazard he may not lift the ball for identification? I realize there is no penalty for playing the wrong ball in a hazard.

A4: No. Rule 33-1e does not prohibit a player from lifting his ball for identification when it lies in a hazard. It merely describes an alter-

native procedure which may be employed. A player may lift his ball for identification, as provided in Rule 23-2, at any place on the course.

Flagstick May Be Removed by Opponent

USGA 52-39
R. 11-4, 34-2c,d

Q: In match play when player's ball is more than 60 feet from pin, may opponent go to the pin and pull it out even though player does not wish him to and objects? No caddie involved.

Question by: C. J. CLARK
HIGHLAND, CAL.

A: Yes. Rule 34-2c provides: "The opponent may have the flagstick removed if he considers that it might be of assistance to the player, but the player is always entitled to send his own caddie to stand at the hole and hold the flagstick to indicate the position of the hole while he is playing his stroke. A player may not require an opponent or an opponent's caddie to indicate the position of the hole."

When the opponent removes the flagstick and the player has no caddie, if a third party is available and the player requests him to attend the flagstick, the principle of equity (Rule 11-4) would require that the third party be considered an agent of the player within the meaning of Rule 34-2d. If there is no such third party, there is no way for the player to have the position of the hole indicated to him.

In match play the distance to the flagstick is not material.

Improving Lie on Backstroke

USGA 52-40
R. 17-3.

Q: A and B are playing a match. A plays his ball, which lands in sand but not in a hazard. The sand in this particular spot is several inches deep, and A's ball comes to rest in a rather deep heel print, which leaves him a bad lie. A takes his stance and grounds his club, which under the 1952 Rules is permissible. In taking his club back, A drags so much sand on his backward stroke that he is left with almost a flat lie instead of the cuppy lie that he originally had. B claims the hole, claiming that A had violated Rule 17-1 by improving his lie and by altering the irregularities of the surface. A, however, claims that as long as the Rules allow him to ground his club, he is entitled to take his normal back swing as per Rule 17-3 and in so doing he cannot help but take sand with his backward stroke, whether it be a little sand or a couple of inches of sand. He claims that as long as he completes his stroke in the one motion, he has not violated any Rule.

Question by: THOMAS POPE, PRES.
LINCOLN PARK GOLF CLUB
SAN FRANCISCO, CAL.

A: A lost the hole by improving the lie of his ball in violation of Rule 17-3, which provides in part that, "The club may be grounded only lightly and must not be pressed on the ground."

**Artificial Boundary Stakes
Not Obstructions When Not Boundary**

USGA 52-41
D. 20; R. 31

Q: The Rules this year state that out-of-bounds stakes are not obstructions and therefore may not be pulled up, nor may the ball be lifted or dropped free and away from the stake. At Rockville Country Club we have a line of stakes to the right of the eighth fairway on which the direction of play is south. The seventh parallels the eighth, but the direction of play is north. Now, in playing the seventh these stakes have no significance. The out of bounds area that they mark is an area that is out of bounds only when playing the eighth hole. Nevertheless, they are out of bounds stakes.

Do you think that a player playing north on the seventh fairway should be granted relief from these stakes, when they do not have any out-of-bounds significance for play on that hole?

Question by: JOHN D. HAWKE
ROCKVILLE CENTRE, N. Y.

A: Yes. We would recommend that the stakes between the seventh and eighth holes be declared obstructions for purposes of play on the seventh hole, where they do not serve as an artificial boundary, and be declared not obstructions for purposes of play on the eighth hole, where they do serve as an artificial boundary; see Definition 20.

This would require the players to treat the stakes as boundary stakes where they do form a boundary but would also permit relief, under Rule 31, where the stakes do not constitute a boundary.



14-Club Rule Violated

R & A 52-15
R. 3.

Q: Maximum of 14 clubs. It is permitted to add as many as will bring the total to that number. It is not allowed to borrow a club from any other person playing on the course. What would happen in the following case:

A player starts with 10 clubs which are carried by his caddie. The player takes his chauffeur along, who accompanies the match walking along the edge of the fairway, and who carried

10 clubs under his arm. Whenever difficulties arise during the match, the player will add to his number of clubs out of those 10 clubs from the chauffeur up to the limit of 14 clubs. In such case the player would enjoy the choice out of 20 clubs which are forbidden according to the Rule.

Question by: THE SECRETARY
GERMAN GOLF UNION

A: In the case you quote the player is in fact commencing the round with twenty clubs carried by two caddies and should be disqualified if his intention is known or becomes apparent in the opinion of the Committee in charge of the competition, during the round.

Ball Holed, Not Lost

R & A 52-20.
R. 7-2

Q: A player, playing in a stroke competition, did a short hole in one, but as the hole was not in sight from the tee he did not know it. After searching for the ball and not finding it, he went back to the tee and played another, and only discovered that he had holed his first tee shot, on holing out his second ball. Should his score for this hole in the stroke competition be 1 or 5?

A: The score made with the first ball counts. In the circumstances quoted it is not considered that the player should be penalized under Rule 29 (Lost Ball).

Wall Is Obstruction

R & A 52-25.
Def. 20.

Q: Under Definition 20, regarding obstructions, we note that this is anything artificial whether erected, placed or temporarily left on the course, and should apply to walls which are not boundary walls.

We have on our course a wall which runs from behind the 13th green uphill parallel to the 17th fairway, and downhill again still parallel with this fairway. The wall is not a boundary wall, but is merely an old dry stane dyke, which was on the ground before the course was made. The fairway extends to within a foot or so of the wall, on one side, but the rough is right up against the wall on the other side, and we shall be pleased to know if Rule 31, paragraph two should apply on both sides of the wall, i.e. not only on the fairway but also in the rough, or can the Rule be made to apply only to balls which finish on the fairway side of the wall, so that balls lying in the rough over the wall should either be played as they lie or should be treated as unplayable?

Question by: THE SECRETARY
HILTON PARK GOLF CLUB
SCOTLAND

A: The wall on both sides unless stated to the contrary by local rule is an obstruction. Def. 20.